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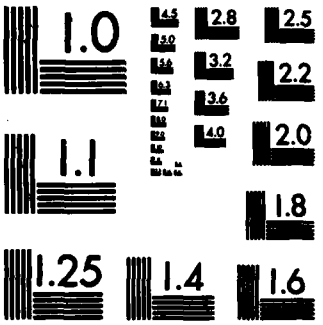

THE *MILITARY HERITAGE OF AMERICA*: A REVIEW OF THE 1984 REVISED EDITION

Edmund Dews

December 1984

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The virtues of *Military Heritage of America,* by Ernest and Trevor Dupuy, first published in 1956,[1] are substantial and well known. In a single readable volume of 21 chapters and 800 pages it introduced college students to the study of warfare, the principles of war, the concepts of strategy and tactics, the evolution of military theory, and--nine-tenths of the book--the history of American wars and campaigns from King William's War in the 1690s to the 1953 Armistice in Korea. It did all this while paying some regard to military developments abroad and the evolution of military technology. It drew extensively on instructional materials developed at West Point. And--a virtue increasingly rare nowadays--it was well illustrated with diagrams and maps. The text was supplemented by helpful chronologies of military events and the evolution of military materiel. Finally, it provided a good bibliography of works in English and a particularly useful index.

[1]The 1984 edition is published by HERO Books, Fairfax, Virginia, at $29.95.

It had, of course, some weaknesses. It was sometimes overly brief; for example, in discussing the defeat of Poland in 1939 it said nothing about the fact that the Poles eventually faced a Soviet as well as a German foe. It was much more a history of land warfare than a "military history" in the more comprehensive, modern sense; seapower and airpower were sometimes noticed but were never allowed near the center of the stage. It said little about the problems of high command in joint operations, and the importance of logistics factors as constraints and intelligence as an input in military decisions was understated and seldom illustrated. The contribution of military operations research in recent conflicts was ignored.

All in all, however, the 1956 edition admirably filled the need at that time for an introductory text for ROTC students and other undergraduates; it attracted quite a number of general readers; and it served more advanced readers as a handy source in which to find dates, names, and references to more specialized studies.

What has just been said about the 1956 edition applies almost equally well to the 1984 revised edition, because the two are similar--disappointingly similar. Most of those who have the 1956 edition will find little reason to invest in the new book, about 90 percent of which appears to be photographically identical to the old. What is new (some 75 pages) is distinguishable by a slight difference in type face and consists of an additio reface, three new chapters, and a brief —

supplementary index to the new material. The titles of the three added chapters (as given in the table of contents) are (1) "Cold War ~~Aboard [sic]~~ Abroad; Controversy at Home; 1947-1965," (2) "The Vietnam War," and (3) "Living with Nuclear Confrontation." The chronological tables have not been updated, nor has the bibliography, where the most recent item is dated 1955. The latter is the more serious criticism, partly because much of importance about World War II and Korea has been published since 1955, and partly because the new chapters, unlike the old, provide no footnote references to sources or specialized studies, and mention almost none in the text. Thus a reader interested in the Vietnam War is not led to any of the important recent works such as Donn Starry's *Armored Combat in Vietnam*.

Most military professionals and historians who know the 1956 edition will probably turn first to the new Preface and then to the chapter on the war in Vietnam, and then look back at the chapters on World War II to see how the recent revelations about signal intelligence have been handled. Unfortunately, the new Preface provides no guidance as to what is new and what is old in the new edition.

The war in Vietnam is still difficult to write about objectively, but things are now coming into perspective, and one would have hoped for something with more insight and balance than the 38 pages offered here. Nowhere is the book's tendency to downplay the role of the Air Force and Navy more apparent. The largest, longest, and most controversial air interdiction campaign in history, involving hundreds of thousands of Air

Force and Navy fighter-bomber sorties, is almost completely ignored here, in marked contrast to the book's treatment of interdiction in the chapter on Korea. A glance at the supplementary index is revealing. There are no entries for close air support, interdiction, or tactical air support, none for Barrel Roll and Steel Tiger, none for Commando Hunt and Rolling Thunder, none for Igloo White. Lieutenant Calley is mentioned but not Secretary McNamara.

Authors and publishers who bring out revised editions of World War II histories written in the 1950s and 1960s face a serious problem in deciding how to take account of what we now know to be the key role played by signal intelligence in the operations of the Western Allies, especially after 1942. This was the best and longest kept secret of the war. It was not until F. W. Witherbotham's *The Ultra Secret* appeared in 1974, and especially Ronald Lewin's *Ultra Goes to War* in 1978, that it began to be understood how profoundly--and advantageously--signal intelligence (Ultra, Magic, and others) could and did influence the plans and decisions of Allied commanders. This was true in battles such as Alamein, the Avranches gap, Matapan, and Midway, to name only a few, and in long-term operations such as the submarine campaign in the Pacific, the anti-submarine campaign in the Atlantic, and the Overlord deception plan.

Michael Howard tells us that "all historians must now read what Lewin has to say before putting pen to paper." But what is the responsibility of the historian who puts out a 1984 revision of a work written in the 1950s? He might rewrite the material

to make signal intelligence an integral part of his account. Or he might add a new, possibly brief, section on signal intelligence, with an assessment of its significance and a discussion of how the recently released material may require substantial reevaluation of some decisions and events. Or, he might simply acknowledge the apparent importance of the new insights and provide a list of references in which the reader could pursue the topic. This last is the minimum the reader has the right to expect in a work such as the present volume, which devotes over 200 pages to World War II. But he will not find any of this there.

In sum, this is still a useful volume; we can be glad that it is in print. But it is no longer the fairly comprehensive, up-to-date work that it was in the 1950s. If it is used as a textbook, it must be supplemented with other materials for the period after 1940.

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